



Gifted & Entrusted V - Purpose
November 8th, 2020

Twin Towers United Methodist Church

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WORSHIP GUIDE

Before you begin your time of worship, find a comfortable place to be and gather whatever you might need: your Bible, some paper or a notebook, something to write with, your computer/connected device (if you intend to listen to music online), etc. Feel free to adapt this worship guide in any way that makes best sense to you and those you might be gathered with. (Consider inviting someone – a friend, a family member – to worship with you.) Commit to spending the next hour with God.

PRELUDE - Listen and sing along to a song or hymn that blesses and centers your spirit!

WELCOME – Welcome to this time of worship! You are invited to pause for a moment and consider: *What do you think your purpose is? Is that an easy or hard question? How have you experienced purpose as a gift in your life?* Today, we meditate on purpose as a gift from God that we are entrusted with. When you are ready, take a deep breath in, out, and arriving in this time of worship.

OPENING HYMN - “He Came Down”, TFWS 2085

Listen here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=apE6f5Wj_aw

He came down that we may have love (x3)

Hallelujah forevermore.

He came down that we may have peace (x3)

He came down that we may have joy (x3)

OPENING PRAYER – *You are invited to take a deep breath as you pray:*

God of all power, you are the One who called this world into being.

We acknowledge that you have no equal in the extent of your power.

Yet, you came down to share your power—your strength—with those who are powerless.

You ache to heal the brokenhearted and to bind up the wounds of the lost and rejected folk of this world. Such radical love leaves us speechless, but you gave it human form and shape in the person of Jesus, in whom your promises of healing and empowerment were fulfilled.

We give you thanks and praise for blessing our lives in this way,

and we pray that in Jesus and through the power of the Holy Spirit,
we too can become radical lovers of the powerless,
we too can become passionate bearers of hope to those whose lives are filled with despair
and hopelessness.

May this time of worship be a true expression of our desire to praise and glorify you, O
God. May our lives reveal our gratitude for who you are and the grace you pour down on us,
in all we think, and say, and do. This we pray in Jesus' name. Amen.

~Adapted from Moira Laidlaw, and posted on the Liturgies Online

SCRIPTURE - Luke 4:38- 44 / NRSV

³⁸ After leaving the synagogue he entered Simon's house. Now Simon's mother-in-law was suffering from a high fever, and they asked him about her. ³⁹ Then he stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Immediately she got up and began to serve them.

⁴⁰ As the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases brought them to him; and he laid his hands on each of them and cured them. ⁴¹ Demons also came out of many, shouting, "You are the Son of God!" But he rebuked them and would not allow them to speak, because they knew that he was the Messiah.

⁴² At daybreak he departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowds were looking for him; and when they reached him, they wanted to prevent him from leaving them. ⁴³ But he said to them, "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." ⁴⁴ So he continued proclaiming the message in the synagogues of Judea.

This is the Word of God for the people of God. **Thanks be to God!**

LISTEN -

What a week! I don't know about you but half the time I couldn't figure out if I was coming or going, up or down, riddled with anxiety or plain numb. I don't think I've ever experienced an election quite like this one. Have you? And so I'm thankful for this time to gather in community and in worship to return to my center, to find my grounding in God, to remember what this is all about.

During the week, in the midst of the frantic checking of election results, I found myself thinking back over the gifts we've lifted up throughout our current worship series. Thus far, we have lifted up the gift of creation (I came across a book this week entitled, "Earth, Our Original Monastery". I love that image, don't you? The blurb for the book began: "How can we meet God in our everyday lives? In *Earth, Our Original Monastery*, Christine Valters Paintner...shares how living contemplatively with an appreciation for the natural world can make you more aware of the presence of God in every aspect of your life.), the gift of the common good, that sacred space that lives between us and that enables all of us (not just some of us) to thrive together, and the gift of stories and legacies, especially of the saints who have shown us how to live God's radical love.

As I thought about these gifts, it struck me that this election in particular, though perhaps every election, is a serious reflection point for us on how we have and how we will steward the gifts we've been entrusted with by God. Elections give us a chance to reflect backwards on what's been done and aspire forward to what we hope for. As I've done that, my personal sense is that each of these gifts we have talked about thus far have been battered, harmed, and dishonored over the last stretch. We have, speaking confessionally, not done well, not furthered God's dreams with what we've been entrusted with.

This past week, the United States became the first country in the entire world to pull out of the Paris Climate Agreement, a global attempt to engage a serious global issue. This happened even as extreme weather: hurricanes, cyclones, blizzards, and unusually high temperatures occurred in different corners of the globe and claimed lives. We have seen our sense of the common good stretched and frayed far beyond a healthy point as all kinds of divisions have been stoked and encouraged from the highest offices on down. We have allowed our fears and suspicions of one another to flourish, drowning out our better and braver angels who would otherwise guard us from becoming enemies. The stories and legacies of those who have come before us, of those who have made our lives possible, have been obscured of late as we claim to stand on no one's shoulders but our own. I can't see how God is honored in any of this, nor how God's reign is realized.

And so, if this election has made anything clear to me, it is that we who are disciples of Jesus and lovers of God must claim (reclaim?) our purpose with clarity and urgency, unwavering as

we move onwards, just as Jesus did. Yes, the election is over, but as we've always said, the work of healing and hope, of liberation and love, continues on.

There's a lot to be said about the gift of purpose. Rick Warren who has written much about purpose, wrote, "Without a purpose, life is motion without meaning, activity without direction, and events without reason. Without a purpose, life is trivial, petty, and pointless." Does that resonate? I imagine we've all had moments, seasons even, when we wonder, "What is this all about? What am I doing? Why am I doing it? Is there something more?" I imagine we all know something about the emptiness and lostness that can come when we are disconnected from purpose. Flipped on its head, purpose brings meaning, direction, and reason to our lives. Purpose brings richness, significance, and impact. I trust that you have known this to be true too, have known the fullness and joy that comes with living in our purpose. Purpose is surely a gift from God.

In our scripture this morning, Jesus has just started his public ministry. In fact, if we were to go to the beginning of chapter 4, we'd find Jesus in the wilderness, where he was led by the Holy Spirit. You might know that story: after 40 days of fasting and prayer, of encountering temptation, he emerges "filled with the power of the Spirit" and, according to Luke, begins teaching. Soon after, we find him at Simon's house. This is, at least according to Luke, before Simon has been called as a disciple. That doesn't happen until chapter 5.

At Simon's house, Jesus not only heals Simon's mother-in-law, but "all those who had any who were sick with various kinds of diseases". In Mark's version of this same story, he tells us that "the whole city was gathered around the door" (Mark 1: 33). So we might imagine that there were quite a few who were brought to Jesus and Jesus "laid his hands on each of them and cured them." That feels so deeply empathetic and present, doesn't it? By morning, when he wanted to leave, we're told "crowds" were now looking for him, presumably so that he might touch and heal them, meet their needs, free them from the physical and spiritual forces that bound them. And this was not a shy crowd for they tried to prevent him from leaving. We might sense a little of their longing even desperation as they encounter such a powerful healer in Jesus. But instead of staying, instead of continuing to lay on hands and heal, instead of meeting the clear needs that were right in front of him - all things that we might expect of Jesus, Jesus declares his purpose: "I must proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also; for I was sent for this purpose." And then he moves onward.

I can't imagine it to have been easy, this walking away and moving onward. We know Jesus, after all, to be deeply compassionate, open to all that seek him. We have seen how he is "moved with compassion" when he sees the need in front of him. Yet he walks away. He moves onward. Why? Because his purpose calls him onward.

Do we know our purpose? I'm not talking about just any purpose but our God-given purpose? Are we able to articulate it as Jesus did? Do we allow our purpose to shape our priorities, our decisions, whether we stay or go?

At our core, Friends, I believe we share a common purpose: to love God with our whole heart, soul, and strength, and to love our neighbor. That is a purpose that will keep us busy our whole life long and it is a purpose woven into our being. Created in God's image, the image of Love, how could our purpose be anything but to love? I also believe that we who follow Jesus are called to his same purpose, "to proclaim the good news of the kingdom of God to the other cities also", which is to say, to proclaim the presence, the power, and the ongoing transformative activity of Love in our lives and beyond. This isn't just done through words, but through our actions, through our very lives. There are literally a million ways to live that purpose.

How do we do that as Twin Towers? Well, over a year ago, our congregation underwent a discernment process, a season of deep prayer and listening. Through that process, *our* call for how to live God's purpose emerged (can you say it with me?): to be conduits of God's healing, in our neighborhood and beyond, and in so doing have a positive impact on the last and the least. This purpose is what guides our decision making, our choices, and our onward movement here at Twin Towers. It is how we said yes to becoming a partner in Dine & Connect, how we said yes to hosting the Mao family on our grounds, yes to diving deep into healing prayer, and yes to exploring community health. Holding tight to our purpose has brought growth, depth, and change in this community. It's really quite exciting. I am daily grateful for who we are and who we are becoming as we seek to live out this purpose!

And so I want to encourage you and commend you, Friends, to hold fast to your purpose, to our purpose - this gift from God - as we move into the season ahead. We need to do so with clarity, conviction, and urgency. There's no question that God's radical love and transformative healing are needed as we make a way forward in the aftermath of this election. In one sense, it

makes no difference who is in office. Our purpose remains the same and the work of God's kingdom continues! Let us move onward! Amen.

PRAYERS of the PEOPLE – *Spend time in prayer. What did you hear for yourself through today's scripture and reflection? Talk to God about it. Then lift up the joys and concerns that are in your heart. You might write them down, speak them aloud, or pray them in silence.*

I would be honored to pray with you and for you.

Please send a note via text, mail, or email or give me a call if I can do so.

SHARING OUR GIFTS– *How might you offer yourself and all that you have to God this week? How are you being invited to practice generosity? Spend a moment listening for God's direction.*

You are invited to contribute financially towards the purpose and ministry of TTUMC. We are a congregation committed to being conduits of God's healing in our neighborhood and beyond, and in so doing, impact the last and the least. You can contribute by mailing in a check, dropping off cash, or giving online via PayPal (visit www.twintowersumc.org). Take a moment and do that now.

CLOSING HYMN - "Sois la Semilla (You Are the Seed)", UMH 583, vs 1&2

Listen here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=yIsbF-w6i3k>

1. You are the seed that will grow a new sprout;
you're a star that will shine in the night;
you are the yeast and a small grain of salt,
a beacon to glow in the dark.
You are the dawn that will bring a new day;
you're the wheat that will bear golden grain;
you are a sting and a soft gentle touch,
my witness where'er you go.

Refrain:

Go, my friends, go to the world, proclaiming love to all,
messengers of my forgiving peace, eternal love.

Be, my friends, a loyal witness, from the dead I arose,
“Lo I’ll be with you forever, till the end of the world”

2. You are the flame that will lighten the dark,
sending sparkles of hope, faith, and love,
you are the shepherds to lead the whole world
through valleys and pastures of peace.
You are the friends that I chose for myself,
the word that I want to proclaim.
You are the new kingdom built on a rock
where justice and truth always reign.
Refrain

BENEDICTION - Go into the week before you knowing that you are created with purpose!
Go into the week convinced that, like Jesus, you have been sent! Keep your eyes open, your
ears open, your heart open, and your hands open. And as you do so, know that the love of
God surrounds you, grounds you, and guides you, now and always.

NOW GO AND PASS CHRIST’S PEACE!



If you are on Facebook, please like and follow our page:
<https://www.facebook.com/ttuncAlameda/>

SCRIPTURE for Nov. 15th, 2020: **Matthew 5:1-14**

PRAYER INVITES:

- People who have been laid off and are unemployed.
- The healing of the divides in our country.